

Series Introduction

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In Summer 2007, the committee of the Forum for Research on the Languages of Scotland and Ulster (FRLSU) took the decision to develop a peer-reviewed online, free to read, publication system. The reasons behind this decision can be given succinctly. Since the 1980s, it has become increasingly difficult to publish collections of essays – in particular, perhaps, collected papers from conferences. With subjects which command a large audience, such as Shakespearian studies or modern history, publishers may be convinced that their initial outlay would be recouped; the topics and languages with which the FRLSU are concerned do not have that size of audience. Although up to 2007 the FRLSU had been able to find a publisher for the proceedings of its triennial conferences, this had become difficult, to put it mildly. It seemed likely that the next set of proceedings could not and would not be published in the same way.

Research suggested that other scholarly fields which did not appeal to a mass audience, such as classical poetics, were already moving towards a model where excellence (guaranteed by stringent peer-review) and free availability (through the internet) could be combined. It seemed therefore to be an apposite time to set up our own internet publishing venture. An international editorial board (detailed in the frontispiece) who represented many of the disciplines with which the FRLSU is concerned was recruited. At the same time the FRLSU vision for the series grew. Instead of only publishing collections of essays from its triennial conferences and annual symposia, it was decided that the editorial board would also consider once-off collections (of which the present volume is the first) and, occasionally, monographs. Suggestions for volumes of this type should be sent to the Series Editor (r.millar@abdn.ac.uk). Although the languages of Scotland and Ireland remain the central focus of the organisation and its publishing arm, comparative studies with languages spoken elsewhere in the world are very welcome.